

INTRODUCTION

I began coaching youth soccer at the age of seventeen, over twenty-five years ago. At that time, and still in many soccer circles today, if you didn't have a foreign soccer background, playing or coaching, you weren't credible. Like most youth soccer coaches in the U.S., I didn't grow up playing a lot of soccer. I didn't grow up with soccer heroes. I didn't grow up watching soccer on television. I didn't even particularly like soccer. I grew up playing ice hockey, unusual in itself since I was born and raised in Northern California, where the American basics, of baseball, football, and basketball predominated. This lack of soccer background was something that I kept quiet and didn't mention for quite some time. Frankly, I felt a little embarrassed about it. So how did I end up as a professional and college soccer coach and, in particular, a professional goalkeeping trainer and coach?

The answer is really quite simple, as would be the advice to an aspiring athlete, I work harder than most, I put in more time than most of my peers and I am a student of the game. It was a long process of time, effort, learning and maybe a little necessity. I began to learn and then specialize in goalkeeper training about 20 years ago when; the team I was working with very obviously needed a goalkeeper. I was awarded my National "A" Coaching License in 1993 from the United States Soccer Federation. I returned to college as a player/coach in 1994 and 1995 and I became the Director of Coaching for United States Youth Soccer of Nevada in 1996. In 1997 I became the head coach of a

professional soccer team and in 1998 I began my college coaching career. What a blast, I coach soccer for a living.

What exactly does it mean to be a student of the game? First, one must spend a tremendous amount of time, watching, listening, and learning from others. I ask questions and talk about the game with my peers from a physical, psychological, philosophical and social viewpoint as often as possible. The game does not need to be re-invented, just refined and maintained. I have tried to leave no source of insight untapped. The research in this area of specialization is experience gained from other coaches and, of course, from the game and athletes. Furthermore, it's a time consuming process of watching the game played and trained, as well as, analyzing individual players and assessing the reasons for success or failure in each case. Lastly, you must work, and continue to work, to be the best possible teacher and student of the game.

I am fascinated by the individual nature of goalkeeping, and at the same time its critical affect on the outcome of this great team game. I have learned many aspects of the position, changed my methods of training many times and developed many of my own conclusions. I have reached five particular conclusions, at this point, that I believe to be true and that I am fairly passionate about:

- 1. Young goalkeepers cannot be allowed to just make the save. Correct and proper technique is vital to their future development and success.*

2. *Goalkeeping specialization should not take place until after the age of ten years old.*
3. *Individual and specialized training is an absolute requirement of becoming a quality goalkeeper.*
4. *The goalkeeper should be the best overall athlete on the soccer team.*
5. *An outstanding goalkeeper, more so than any other player, can make the difference to an outstanding team.*

So why then do we spend so little specialized time with our goalkeepers? Even at the professional and college levels the goalkeepers are often left to train on their own, and coaches at all levels falsely believe that shooting (finishing) and goalkeeper training can be done economically together. The reason for this misconception and for the lack of specialized goalkeeper training would seem to be a lack of goalkeeping knowledge. Unfortunately, we just do not have many qualified goalkeeping instructors in the United States.

Goalkeeping must be trained as a specialized position and given the attention and respect that warrants the results we want and expect. Goalkeeper training is not a matter of kicking the ball at somebody and hoping he or she stops it. It is a complex cluster of specifically designed and trained techniques that are unique only to soccer goalkeepers. Additionally, within specific goalkeeper training there must be specific training for an individual goalkeeper. All goalkeepers are different people and athletes. Within the scope of this book I will expand on the point of

specialized goalkeeper training and on the other issues mentioned above. Moreover, I will discuss the techniques and teaching methods of goalkeeping and the philosophies of choosing a goalkeeper and coaching these uniquely special and versatile athletes.



Intro.1: Goalkeeper Brian Sarber, three time NSCAA Regional All-America.
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CHAPTER I

What's A Soccer Goalkeeper Look Like?

While some may disagree and others will definitely disagree, I am convinced that the physical attributes of a soccer goalkeeper must be that of an exceptional and diverse athlete. Additionally, I can state with confidence that the goalkeeper should be the best overall athlete on a soccer team. No other player on a soccer team is asked to perform such an extensive variety of athletic skills. No other player must have such a command of his or her mental assets throughout a match or training, and no other player can so decisively have the match hinge on their performance at any one moment.

The modern soccer goalkeeper must possess many physical and psychological personal attributes. I use the term “modern” because goalkeeping has changed tremendously in the last twenty years to become a much more diversified position. The modern goalkeeper, with the present laws and tactical changes in the game, is now forced and expected to master the same strong technical ball control skills of any field player. Goalkeepers no longer stand on their line waiting for a shot. They command and control the defense and the penalty area in a style of play that requires movement that has raised the level of soccer play in general. Furthermore, with a higher and more complete understanding of the entire game and with added mobility, the modern goalkeeper is often instrumental in starting an explosive and exciting attack. The modern and complete goalkeeper is an exceptional, versatile and multifaceted athlete.